



**Testimony of**

**City of New Britain Public Safety Telecommunications Director**

**James P. Donnelly**

**RE: House Bill 6015**

**February 7, 2013**

Senator Hartley and Representative Dargan and members of the Public Safety Committee thank you for the opportunity to remark on pending legislation regarding 9-1-1 services in Connecticut. 9-1-1 service is universal in Connecticut and is well settled. As some of you may know, it was not always this way. Some communities had 9-1-1 service for part of their municipality but other areas were not covered because telephone company boundaries did not match municipal boundaries. Enhanced 9-1-1 settled this problem two decades ago. One of the great fears that many communities had at that time was "over use" of 9-1-1 for service issues that were not emergencies. While this does occur regularly in every community, it is no longer the calling issue that is the problem. Time has taught us that there are fundamentally only three reasons to call those three numbers, 9-1-1; ***To Save a Life, To Stop a Crime, and To Report a Fire.*** While people call for many reasons that they believe are emergencies, most are not and an appropriate response or referral typically resolves the issue.

The legislation proposed while well intentioned appears to have unintended consequences. The legislature long ago gave municipalities the authority to abate nuisances in their communities. This legislation would usurp that authority. Let me cite some real world examples:

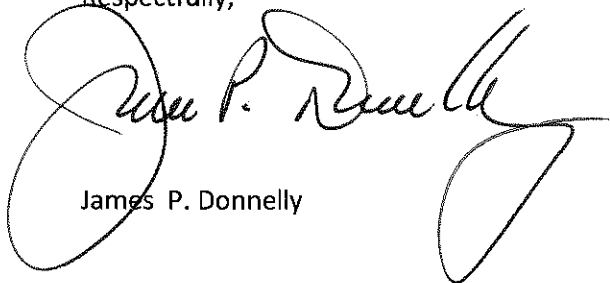
1. Many Connecticut cities and towns have enacted alarm ordinances in an effort to control recurring responses to false alarm conditions. These typically contain scaled fines and other sanctions. These ordinances have operated effectively to address a chronic problem that dispatch centers and police departments face. While alarm companies typically do not use 9-1-1 to notify the police of service requests, neither do residents. Most calls coming in to the New Britain Public Safety Answering Point arrive by seven digit number.
2. The City of New Britain is blessed to be served by a non-profit EMS agency that is partially subsidized by the taxpayers in town. It responds to thousands of 9-1-1 calls annually. If this was a municipally operated service or the billing was done by the City, this legislation would unwittingly preclude it from occurring.
3. Quality of life incidents are important to the residents of urban communities. If left unabated, they drive residents, particularly middle class residents, out. The notion of targeting

interventions on "hot spots" has long been the hallmark of community policing programs nationally. The storied work of professors James Kennedy and Lawrence Sherman in Kansas City and Minneapolis regarding the criminology of places has been emulated across the nation with success. It is in that context that the New Britain hot spot ordinance was born. While it has been construed to mean many things, the one thing that it will not do is fine residents for calling 9-1-1 for the three reasons that 9-1-1 was created. Moreover, the actual number and type of incidents for which it would be affected is actually very small and tightly focused. It is important to note that the New Britain ordinance does not even mention 9-1-1 service. Instead, it is designed to focus on chronic service locations for the exclusive purpose of abating nuisances. Focused problem oriented policing is fundamental in preserving communities and improving the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

In much the same way as alarm ordinances were controversial when first proposed as a control on excessive service demand, the notion of focused interventions and sanctions on chronic service locations may prove equally useful. Indeed, it may be fully consistent with the legacy legislation empowering municipalities to abate nuisances. To deny municipalities the ability to focus their sanctions on chronic locations and individuals is counter to the long standing intent of the legislature.

I urge your reconsideration of the bill as proposed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James P. Donnelly", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

James P. Donnelly